

[Jacob Ernst, Pioneer of Columbus]

1

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDE BOOK PART IV [III?]

Interviewing of Old Settlers

ROSALIE SCHOMACHER 725 WORDS

PLATTE COUNTY. Duplicate

Living a retired life at his home, 1871 Seventh Street, where he indulges to his heart's content in his hobby of plain and fancy wood-working, is Jacob Ernst to whom, in his infancy, came the distinction of being the first white boy brought to Columbus and Platte county.

Less than a year old was the little settlement that is now the city of Columbus, and only about 18 months old was the little boy who is now a great-grandfather—when his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Ernst, sr., brought him here early in the spring of 1857.

His mother is believed to have been the third white woman to come to Columbus to make her permanent home in the frontier town, Mrs. [?]. C. Wolfel and Mrs Vincent Kummer having preceded her here. His father, history records, was the town's first blacksmith.

Like so many of the other pioneers who settled here in the first years of Columbus' history, the Ernst family came from Columbus, Ohio, and it was there on August 28, 1855 that Jacob, jr., was born.

In the early summer of 1855, year before the founding of Columbus, his father, according to family tradition, passed this spot on the Oregon trail on a journey to the Pike's peak region, returning later to Ohio. Seeking a home in the west and knowing that the little

Library of Congress

settlement of Columbus had been established in the meantime by a group of his fellow-townsmen, he came out here in early fall of 1856. This, he decided, would be the place. So he returned to Ohio and brought his wife and little son out in the spring of '57, stopping in Omaha to get a yoke of oxen.

Their first home here was a sod house near the Loup, not far from the spot where the north approach to the first wagon bridge was later located. But they were flooded out by the high water the following spring and the father sought a site for their new home further from the river. It was then he built a log house—later replaced by a frame cottage—one the lot on Seventh street [C. — [?? Nebr.?

2

where Jacob. jr., in 1898, erected his present spacious home.

In his boyhood Mr. Ernst attended the town's only school which stood on the present site of the First ward building.

Deer and antelope were not uncommon in this vicinity when he was a youngster and there is in his home now the mounted head of a deer that was a pet of the Ernst household in his boyhood.

About 1881—he doesn't remember the exact date—Mr. Ernst became one of the city's early business men, when he and his cousins E. J. Ernst, conducted a hardware store at Eleventh street and Twenty-fifth avenue. Some 15 years later Louis Schwartz acquired E. J. Ernst's interest in the business, and then in 1896, they sold to Chas. Easton.

Many years ago Mr. Ernst represented the first ward as a member of the city council. In more recent years, after he had long since retired from active business, he served for 16 years as an assessor in Columbus.

Library of Congress

It was on May 25, 1881 that Mr. Ernst led to the altar Miss Emma Ogren, member of another pioneer family, who passed away on Feb. 23, 1912. She was the mother of his three children—Chester Ernst and Mrs Earl Galley, of Columbus, and Jacob Lionel, who died in infancy. On Nov. 12, 1912, he married the present Mrs. Ernst who was Mrs. Louisa Bernt. He has three grand-children and two great-grandchildren.

Throughout the years, cabinet making and wood-working in general has been his hobby, and in his home are numerous samples of his expert handicraft, encompassing a wide range of useful and ornamental household articles, from little trinket boxes, cigar boxes, and desk sets to walnut chests, cedar-lined, and a beautiful red wood table.

Hunting, too, was a favorite pastime of his earlier years, and he has a fine collection of guns reposing in an equally fine cabinet of his own making.

It is at this hobby of cabinet making that Mr. Ernst may be found busying himself in his home most any time. In the span of his life to date this oldest 3 man in Columbus from standpoint of years of continuous residence here, had seen the home town grow from a few log cabins and soddies along the Loup to a thriving city of more than 8,000 people. But, modest and unassuming, he is reticent about talking of himself for publication.

Information for above taken from a recent special edition of the Columbus Daily telegram. Dated August 31, 1936.